

## HOUSE...No. 55.

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### P E T I T I O N .

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*To the Legislature of Massachusetts, in General Court  
Assembled.*

The subscribers, inhabitants of the Town of Ipswich, respectfully represent :

That they believe Freemasonry to be an useless and pernicious Institution, dangerous to the rights and liberties of individuals, and the country.

That in a neighboring State, *an American citizen*, for disclosing the secrets of Masonry, was by Masons kidnapped and murdered; that a *large number* of the Masonic Fraternity were *directly* engaged in these acts; that every means in their power were used by the *Fraternity generally*, to *screen* those engaged in this horrible transaction, from deserved punishment; and that this transaction was the *natural* and *necessary* consequence of *Masonic feelings, oaths and obligations*, and that in every country where Masonry exists, similar results, in like circumstances, have followed.

That Masonry as a *secret society*, affords a ready and *unsuspected* cloak for political plots and conspiracies, and in most countries where it exists it has been frequently used for that purpose, and that it is therefore in *this respect also*, dangerous to the liberties of the country.

That one object of Masonry, sanctioned and enjoined by its oaths and obligations, has been to secure to Masons exclusive political privileges, and promotion, civil advantages and emoluments, and shelter from law and justice, by secret co-operation and assistance, at the ballot box, in the Courts of law from the Juries and Bench, and in the private and social relations of life ; and that in many parts of the country, the dearest rights of other citizens have been sacrificed to this unjust and secret combination. We believe, that if such an Institution as Masonry, were now for the first time to be established, that it would be looked upon with universal fear and detestation.

And while we allow that many good men have ignorantly become Masons, and thus given the sanction of their names to this dangerous Institution, yet that such have in general, upon becoming by experience acquainted with its true principles and practices, only been prevented from publicly deserting and denouncing it, by the oaths they have taken, and their fear of the deadly vengeance of the Fraternity.

We therefore pray, that you would *fully and thoroughly investigate* Freemasonry, and bring it to the light ; that if it should be found to be a good and useful Institution, that you would encourage and promote it ; but, if it should be found useless and pernicious, and dangerous to the lives and liberties of the community, that you would wholly and utterly abolish it by law.

WILLIAM OAKES,

*and Forty-nine others.*